The Clue of the Pigtail

By Sax Rohmer

HE most promising lad at the yard," said Inspector Weymouth; and his usually gruff voice had softened strangely.

Nayland Smith struck his right fist into the palm of his left hand and swore under his breath, striding up and down the neat little room. No one spoke for a moment, and in the silence I could hear the whispering of the Thames outside-of the Thames which had so many strange secrets to tell and now was burdened with another.

He lay prone upon the deal table-this latest of the river's dead-dressed in rough sailor garb, and, to all outward seeming, a seaman of nondescript nationality-such as is no stranger in Wapping and Shadwell. His dark, curly hair clung clammily about the brown forehead; his skin was stained, they told me. He wore a gold ring in one ear, and three fingers of the left hand were missing.

"It was almost the same with Mason." The river police inspector was speaking. "Three weeks ago, on a Wednesday, he went off in his own time on some funny business down St. George's way-and Thursday night the 10 o'clock boat got the grapnel on him off Hanover Hole, His first two fingers on the right hand were clean gone and his left hand was mutilated frightfully."

He paused, and glanced at Smith. "That lascar, too," he continued, "that you came down to see, sir-you remember his hands?"

Smith nodded. "He was not a lascar," he said shortly. "He was a dacoit.

I turned to the array of objects lying on the tablethose which had been found in the dead man's clothing. None of them were noteworthy, except that which had been found thrust into the loose neck of his shirt. This last it was which had led the police to send for Nayland Smith; for it constituted the first clue which had come to light pointing to the authors of these mysterious tragedies. It was a Chinese pigtail. That alone was sufficiently remarkable; but it was rendered more so by the fact that am lost! If you could only understand-you

the plaited queue was a false one, being attached to a most ingenious bald wig. "You're sure it wasn't part of a Chinese make-up?" questioned Weymouth, his eye on the strange relic. "Poor

Cadby was clever at disguise." Smith snatched the wig from my hands, with a certain irritation, and tried to fit it on the dead detective. "Too small by inches!" he jerked; "and look how it's

padded in the crown. This thing was made for a most He threw it down and fell to pacing the room again.

"Where did you find him-exactly?" he asked. "Limehouse Reach-under Commercial Dock Pier-exactly an hour ago."

"And you last saw him at 8 o'clock last night?"-to Weymouth. "Eight to a quarter past."

"You think he has been dead nearly twenty-four

"Roughly-twenty-four hours," I replied. "Then, we know that Cadby was on the track of the Fu-Manchu group; that he followed up some clue which led him to the neighborhood of old Ratcliffe Highway; and that he died the same night. You are sure that is

"Yes," said Weymouth. "He was jealous of giving anything away, poor chap; it meant a big lift for him if he pulled the case off; but he gave me to understand that he expected to spend last night in that district. He left the yard about 8, as I've said, to go to his rooms and dress for the job."

"Did he keep any record of his cases?" "Of course! He was most particular. Cadby was a

man with ambitions, sir! You'll want to see his book. Wait while I get his address. It's somewhere in Brixton." He went to the telephone, and Inspector Ryman covered up the dead man's face.

Nayland Smith was palpably excited.

"He almost succeeded where we have failed, Petrie."
he said. "There is no doubt in my mind that he was het on the track of Fu-Manchu! Poor Mason had probably blundered on the scent, too, and met with a similar fate. Without other evidence, the fact that they both died in the same way as the dacoit would be conclusive; for we know that Fu-Manchu killed the dacoit!"

"What is the meaning of the mutilated hands, Smith?"
"God knows! Cadby's death was from drowning, you

"There are no other marks of violence."
"But he was a very strong swimmer, doctor!" interrupted Inspector Ryman. "Why, he pulled off the quartermile championship at the Crystal Palace last year!

mile championship at the Crystal Palace last year!
Cadby wasn't a man easy to drown. And as for Mason,
he was an R. N. R. and like a fish in the water!"
Smith shrugged his shoulders helplessly.
"Let us hope that one day we shall know how they
died," he said, simply.
Weymouth returned from the telephone.
"The address is No. — Cold Harbor Lane," he reported.
"I shall not be able to come along, but you can't miss it
—it's down beside the Brixton Police Station. There's no
family, fortunately; he was quite alone in the world. His
case book isn't in the American desk, which you'll find
in his sitting room; it's in the cupboard in the corner—
top shelf. Here are his keys, all intact. I think this is the
cupboard key."

"Come on, Petrie!" he said. "We haven't a second Our cab was waiting, and in a few seconds we were speeding along Wapping High street. We had gone no more than a few hundred yards, I think, when Smith suddenly slapped his open hand down on his knee.

"That pigtail!" he cried. "I have left it behind! We must have it, Petrie! Stop! Stop!"

The cab was pulled up, and Smith alighted.

"Don't wait for me!" he directed hurriedly. "Heretake Weymouth's card. Remember where he said the book was? It's all we want. Come straight on to Scotland Yard and meet me there."

"Bat, Smith," I protested, "a few minutes can make no difference!"

"Can't it!" he snapped. "Do you suppose Fu-Manchu is going to leave evidence like that lying about? It's a thousand to one he has it already, but there is just a

of my drive that night I remember nothing, for so lost in thought was I that the cab was outside the house for which I was bound ere I realized that we had quitted the purlieus of Wapping. Yet I had had leisure to review the whole troop of events which had crowded my life since the return of Nayland Smith from Burma. Mentally I had looked again upon the dead Sir Crichton Davey, and with Smith had waited in the dark for the dreadful thing that had killed him. Now, with those remorseless that had killed him. Now, with those remorseless memories jostling in my mind, I was entering the house of Fu-Manchu's last victim; and the shadow of that giant evil seemed to lie upon it like a palpable cloud. Cadby's old landlady greeted me with a queer mixture

of fear and embarrassment in her manner.
"I am Doctor Petrie," I said, "and I regret that I bring bad news respecting Mr. Cadby."
"Oh! sir!" she cried, "don't tell me that anything has happened to him!" And divining something of the mission on which I was come, for such sad duty often falls to the lot of the medical man: "Oh! the poor brave lad!"

And again: "Oh! the poor brave lad!"

Indeed, I respected the dead man's memory more
than ever from that hour, since the sorrow of the worthy
old soul was quite pathetic, and spoke eloquently for the unhappy cause of it.
"There was a terrible wailing at the back of the house last night, doctor, and I heard it again tonight a second before you knocked. Poor lad! It was the same when his

At the moment I paid little attention to her words, for such beliefs are common, unfortunately; but when she was sufficiently composed I went on to explain what I thought necessary. And now the old lady's embarrassment took precedence of her sorrow, and presently the

"There's a-young lady-in his rooms, sir!"
I started. This might mean little or might mean

"She came and waited for him last night, doctor-from ten until half past-and this morning again. She came the third time about an hour ago, and has been

"Do you know her, Mrs. Dolan?"

Mrs. Dolan grew embarrassed again.

"Well, doctor," she said, wiping her eyes the while, "I
do! And God knows he was a good lad and I like a mother to him-but she is not the girl I-should have liked a son of mine to take up with!" At any other time this would have been amusing; now, it might be serious. Mrs. Dolan's account of the wailing became suddenly significant—for perhaps it meant that one of Fu-Manchu's dacoit followers was watching the house. to give warning of any stranger's approach! It was unlikely that I should forget the dark eyes of another of Fu-Manchu's servants. Was that beautiful lure of men, even now in the house, completing her evil work?
"I should never have allowed her in his rooms—" began
Mrs. Dolan again. Then there was an interruption. A soft rustling reached my ears-intimately feminine. The girl was stealing down! The girl was stealing down:

1 leaped out into the hall; and she turned and fled blindly before me—back up the stairs! Taking three steps at a time, I followed her, bounded into the room above almost at her heels, and stood with my back to the door.

She cowered against the desk by the window, a slim figure in a clinging silk gown, which alone explained Mrs.

her hat shadowed her face, but could not hide its startling beauty; could not mar the brilliancy of the skin, nor dim the wonderful eyes of this modern Delilah. For it was

"So I came in time!" I said grimly, and turned the "Oh!" she panted at that, and stood facing me, leaning back with her jewel-laden hands clutching the desk

"Give me whatever you have removed from here," 1 said sternly, "and then prepare to accompany me." She took a step forward, her eyes wide with fear, her

"I have taken nothing!" she said. Her breast was heaving tumultuously. "Oh! let me go! please let me go!" and impulsively she threw herself forward, pressing clasped hands against my shoulder and looking up into

my face with passionate pleading. It is with some shame that I confess how her charm enveloped me like a magic cloud. Unfamiliar with the complex oriental temperament, I had laughed at Nayland Smith when he had spoken of this girl's infatuation. "Love in the east," he had said, "is like the conjuror's mango tree; it is born, grows, and flowers at the touch of a hand." Now in her face I read confirmation of his words. Her clothes or her hair exhaled a faint perfume. Like all Fu-Manchu's servants, she was perfectly chosen for her peculiar duties. Her beauty was wholly intoxicat-

But I thrust her away.

'You have no claim to mercy!" I said. "Do not count upon any. What have you taken from here?"

She grasped the lapels of my coat. I felt how she trembled.

"I will tell you all I can-all I dare!" she panted, eagerly, fearfully. "I should know how to deal with your friend, but with you-I would not be so cruel!" Her slight accent added charm to the musical voice. "I am not free, as your English women are. What I do I must do, for it is the will of my master-and I am only a slave! Ah! you are not a man if you can give me to the police! You have no heart if you can forget that I tried to save you

I had feared that plea; for, in her own oriental fashion, she certainly had tried to save me from a deadly peril-at the expense of my friend. But I had feared the plea-for I did not know how to meet it. How could I give her up, perhaps to stand her trial for murder? And now I fell silent, and she saw why I was

"I may deserve no mercy-I may be even as bad as you think; but what have you to do with the police? It is not your work to hound a woman to death! Could you ever look anand know that she trusted you-if you had done such a thing! Ah! I have no friend in all the world, or I should not be here! Do not be my enemy, my judge, and make me worse than I am; be my friend, and save me-from him!" The beautiful face was close to mine; her breath fanned my cheek. "Have mercy on me!"

At that moment I honestly would have given half of my worldly possessions to have been spared the decision which I knew I must come to. After all, what proof had I that she was a willing accomplice of Dr. Fu-Manchu! Furthermore, she was an oriental, and her code must necessarily be different from mine. Irreconcilable as the thing may be with western ideas, Nayland Smith had really told me that he believed the girl to be a slave. Then there remained that other reason why I loathed the idea of becoming her captor. It was almost tantamount to betrayal! Must I soil my hands

Thus—I suppose—her seductive beauty arguing against my sense of right. The jeweled ingers grasped my shoulders nervously, and her silm body quivered against mine as she watched me with all her soul in her eyes—in an abandonment of pleading despair. Then I remembered the fate of the man in whose room "You lured Cadby to his death!" I said-

and shook her off.
"No! no!" she cried wildly, clutching at me. "No! I swear by the holy name I did not! I watched him—spied upon him—yes! But listen—it was because he would not be warned that he met his death! I could not save him! Ah! I am not so bad as that! I will tell you—I have taken his notebook and torn out the last pages and burned them! Look! in the grate. The book was too big to steal away. I came twice and could not find it! There! will you let me go?"

"If you will tell me where and how to seize Dr. Fuanchu—yes!"

Her hands dropped and she took a backward step. A

Her hands dropped and she took a backward step. A new terror was upon her.

"I dare not! I dare not!"

"Then you would—ir you dared?"

She was watching me intently.

"Not if you would go to find him!" she said.

And with all that I thought her to be, and stern servant of justice that I would have had myself, I felt the hot blood leap to my cheek at all which the words implied. She grasped my arm. implied. She grasped my arm.
"Could you hide me from him if I came to you—and told you all I know?"
"The authorities..."

"The authorities—"
"Ah!" Her eyes flashed. "They can put me on the rack if they choose, but never one word would I speak!
Never one little word!" She threw up her head scornfully. Then the proud glance softened again.

Closer she came, and closer, until she could whisper

Hide me from your police-from him-from everybody; and I will no longer be his slave!"

My heart was beating with painful rapidity: I had not counted on this warring with a woman; moreover, it was harder than I could have dreamed of. For some time I had been aware that by the charm of her personality and the art of her pleading she had brought me down from my judgment seat—had made it all but impossible for me to give her up to justice. Now, I was disarmed—but in a quandary. What should I do? What could I do? I turned away from her and walked to the hearth, in which some paper ask lay and yet emitted a faint small which some paper ash lay and yet emitted a faint smell.

Not more than ten seconds elapsed, I am confident,
from the time that I stepped across the room until I glanced back. But she had gone!
As I leaped to the door, the key turned gently from

'Ma 'alesh!" came her soft whisper; "but I am afraid to trust you-yet! Be comforted, for there is one near who would have killed you had I wished it! Rememberwill come to you whenever you will take me and Light footsteps pattered down the stairs. I heard a stifled cry from Mrs. Dolan as the mysterious visitor ran past her. The front door opened and closed.

"Shen-Yan's is a dope shop in one of the burrows off the old Ratcliffe Highway," said Inspector Weymouth. "Singapore Charlie's they call it. It's a center for some of the Chinese societies, I believe, but all sorts of opium smokers use it. There have never been any complaints that I know of. I don't understand this."

We stood in his room at New Scotland Yard, bending over a sheet of foolscap upon which were arranged some burned fragments from poor Cadby's grate; for so hurriedly had the girl done her work that combustion had not been complete.

not been complete.

"What do we make of this?" said Smith.

Hunchback * lascar went up * unlike * others * not return * till Shen-Yan' (there is no doubt about the name, I think) 'turned me * booming sound * lascar in * mortuary I could ident * not for * days * or suspicite * Tuesday night in a different make * snatch * pigtail * * "The pigtail * * "

"The pigtail again!" rapped Weymouth.
"She evidently burned the torn-out pages all together,"
continued Smith. "They lay flat, and this was in the
middle! I see the hand of retributive justice in that, inspector! Now-we have a reference to a hunchback, and other person*) went up somewhere, presumably upstairs—at Shen-Yan's—and did not come down again. Cadby -at Shen-Yan's-and did not come down again. Cadby, who was there disguised, noted a booming sound. Later, he identified the lascar in some mortuary. We have no means of fixing the date of this visit to Shen-Yan's, but means of fixing the date of this visit to Shen-Yan's, but I feel inclined to put down the 'lascar' as the dacoit who was murdered by Fu-Manchu! It is sheer supposition, however. Bu: that Cadby meant to pay another visit to the place in a different 'make-up' or disguise is evident, and that the Tuesday night proposed was last night is a reasonable deduction. The reference to a pigtail is prinipally interesting because of what was found on Cadby's

Inspector Weymouth nodded affirmatively, and Smith "Exactly 10.23." he said. "I will trouble you, inspector. for the freedom of your fancy wardrobe. There is time

Dolan's distrust. The gaslight was turned very low and to spend an hour in the company of Shen-Yan's opium

Some twenty minutes later two dangerous-looking seafaring rufflans entered a waiting cab, accompanied by Inspector Weymouth, and were driven off into the wilderness of London's night. In this theatrical business there was, to my mind, something ridiculous-almost childish; and I could have laughed heartily had it not been that grim tragedy lurked so near to farce.

The mere recollection that somewhere at our journey's end Fu-Manchu awaited us was sufficient to sober my reflections. Fu-Manchu, who, with all the powers represented by Nayland Smith pitted against him, pursued his dark schemes triumphantly and lurked in hiding within this very area which was so sedulously patrolled! Fu-Manchu, whom I had never seen, but whose name stood for horrors indefinable! Perhaps I was destined to meet the terrible Chinese doctor tonight'

I ceased to pursue a train of thought which promised to lead to morbid depths, and directed my attention to what Smith was saying.

"We will drop down from Wapping and reconnoiter. as you say the place is close to the riverside. Then you can put us ashore somewhere below. Ryman can keep the launch close to the back of the premises and you fellows will be hanging about near the front-near enough to hear the whistle.'

"Yes." assented Weymouth; "I've arranged for that. If you are suspected, you shall give the alarm?" "I don't know." said Smith. thoughtfully. "Even in that event I might wait a while."



"Don't wait too long!" advised the inspector. "We shouldn't be much wiser if your next appearance was on the end of a grapnel, somewhere down Greenwich Reach!—with half your fingers missing!"

The cab pulled up outside the river police depot, and Smith and I entered without delay, four shabby-looking fellows who had been seated in the office springing up to salute the inspector, who followed us in. He nodded,

"Guthrie and Lisle," he said briskly, "get along and find a dark corner which commands the door of Singapore Charlie's off the old Highway. You look the dirtiest of the troupe, Guthrie; you might drop asleep on the pavement, and Lisle can argue with you about getting home. Don't move till you hear the whistle inside or have my orders, and note everybody that goes in and comes out. You other two belong to this division?"

The C. I. D. men having departed, the remaining pair saluted again. saluted again.

"Well, you're on special duty tonight. You've been prompt, but don't stick your chests out so much! Do you know of a back way to Shen-Yan's?"

The men looked at one another and both shook their

"There's an empty shop nearly opposite, sir!" replied one of them. "I know a broken window at the back where we could climb in. Then we could get through to the front and watch from there."
"Good!" cried the inspector. "See you are not spotted,
though; and if you hear the whistle don't mind doing a
bit of damage, but be inside Shen-Yan's like lightning!
Otherwise, wait for orders."

Inspector Ryman came in, glancing at the clock. Launch is waiting," he said. "Right!" replied Smith thoughtfully. "I am half afraid, though, that the recent alarms may have scared our quarry-your man, Mason, and then Cadby. Against which we have this, that, so far as he is likely to know. there has been no clue pointing to this opium den. Re-member, he thinks Cadby's notes are destroyed." "The whole business is an utter mystery to me!" confessed Ryman. "I'm told that there's some danger-ous Chinese devil hiding somewhere in London, and that you expect to find him at Shen-Yan's. Supposing he uses that place, which is possible, how do you know he's there tonight?"

"I don't!" said Smith; "but it is the first clue we have had pointing to one of his haunts, and time means precious lives where Dr. Fu-Manchu is concerned!"

"Who is he, sir, exactly, this Dr. Fu-Manchu?"

"Who is he, sir, exactly, this Dr. Fu-Manchu?"

"I have only the vaguest idea, inspector; but he is no ordinary criminal. He is the greatest genius which the powers of evil have put on earth for centuries! He has the backing of a political group whose wealth is enormous—and his mission in Europe is to pave the way! Do you follow me? He is the advance agent of a movement so epoch making that not one Britisher, and not one American, in 50,000 has ever dreamed of it." Ryman stared, but made no reply; and we went out, passing down to the breakwater and boarding the waiting launch. With her crew of three, the party numbered seven that swung out into the pool, and clearing the pier, drew in again and hugged the marky shore.

The night had been clear enough hitherto, but now came scudding rain banks to curtain the crescent moon, and anon, to unveil her again and show the muddy swirls about us.

The Surrey shore was a broken wall of blackness patched with lights about which moved hazy suggestions of numan activity. The bank we were following offered a prospect even more gloomy: a dense, dark mass, amid which, sometimes, mysterious half-tones told of a dock gate, or sudden high lights leaped flaring to the eye.

"On your left, past the wooden pier! Not where the lamp is—beyond that; next to the dark, square building

"Brop us somewhere handy, then." replied Smith,
"and lie close in with your ears wide open. We may
have to run for it, so don't go far away!"
From the tone of his voice I knew that the night
mystery of the Thames had claimed at least one other 'Dead slow!" came Ryman's order. "We'll put into the stone stairs." A seemingly drunken voice was droning from a neigh-toring alleyway as Smith lurched in hulking fashion to the door of a little stop above which, crudely painted. were the words: SHEN-YAN, BARBER

I shuffled along behind him, and had time to note the box of studs, German shaving tackle, and rolls of twist which lay untidily in the window ere Smith beked the oor open, clattered down three wooden steps, and pulled himself up with a jerk, seizing my arm for suport.

We stood in a bare and very dirty room, which could only claim kinship with a civilized shaving stoon by virtue of the grimy towel thrown across the back of the solitary chair. A Yiddish theatrical bill of some kind, illustrated, adorned one of the walls, and another bill, in what may have been Chinese, completed the decorations. From behind a curtain heavily brocked with filth a little Chinaman appeared, dressed in a loose smock, black trousers and thick-soled slippers and advancing, shook his head vigorously.

"No shavee-no shavee!" he chattered, simil fashion, squinting from one to the other of us with histwinkling

eyes. "Too late! Shuttee shop!" "Don't you come none of it wi' me!" roared Smith in a voice of amazing gruffness, and shook an rtificially dirtied fist under the Chinaman's nose. "Get iside and gimme an' my mate a couple o' pipes! Smokeepipe, you yellow scum-savvy?"

My friend bent forward and glared into the other's eyes with a vindictiveness that amazed me, infamiliar as I was with this form of gentle persuasion. "Kop 'old o' that!" he said, and thrust a coin into the Chinaman's yellow paw. "Keep me waitif an' I'll

pull the dam' shop down, Charlie! You can lay to it!" "No hab got pipee-" began the other. Smith raised his fist, and Yan capitulated. "Allee lightee!" he said. "Full up-no lom. You

> He dived behind the dirty curtan, Smith and I following, and ran up a dark sair. The next moment I found myself in an amosphere which fairly got me by the throat. I was all but unbearable, being loaded with opiun fumes. Never before had I experienced anything like it. Every breath was an agony. A tinoil lamp on a box in the middle of the floor dimy illuminated the horrible place, about the vails of which ten or twelve bunks were ranged and all of them occupied. Most of the ocupants were lying motionless, but one or two were squatting in their bunks noisily sucking at the little metal pipes. These had not yet ittained to the opium smoker's Nirvana.

> "No loom-samee tella you," said Sien-Yan, complacently testing Smith's shilling vith his yellow, decayed teeth. Smith walked to a corner and fropped,

cross-legged on the floor, pulling me down with him. "Two pipe quick!" he said. "Plent; room!

Two piecee pipe-or plenty heap trouble" Yan handed him the pipe, which he romptly put to his lips, and prepared another fir me. "Whatever you do, don't inhale any" came

It was with a sense of nausea greatel even than that occasioned by the disgusting at-mosphere of the den that I took the pip and pretended to smoke it. Taking my cue from my friend, I allowed my head gradually to sink lower and lower, until, within a few mautes. I sprawled sideways on the floor, Smith lying close beside me. 'The ship's sinkin'," droned a voice from

one of the bunks. "Look at the rats."

Yan had noiselessly withdrawn and I experienced a curious sense of isolation from my fellows—from the whole of the western world.

My throat was parched with the fume; my head ached. The vicious atmosphere semed I was as one dropped

• • somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments,

Smith began to whisper softly.

"We have carried it through successfully so far," he said. "I don't know if you have observed it, but there is a stair just lehind you, half concealed by a ragged curtain We are near that and well in the dark. I have seen nothing suspicious so far—or nathing much. But if there was anything going forward it would no doubt be delayed unit we ward it would no doubt be delayed until we new arrivals were well doped. Ssh!"

He pressed my arm to emphasize the warning. Through my ha!!-closed eyes I perceived a shadowy form near the curtan to which he had referred. I lay like a log but my muscles were tensed nervously.

The shadow materialized as the igure moved forward into the room with a curiously

was able to make out a ghastly parchaent face, with small oblique eyes, and a misshapen head crowned with a coiled pitail, surmounting a slight, hunched body. There was something unnatural, inhuman, about that masklike face, and something repulsive it the bent snape of the long, yenow hands chaped one upon the other. lithe movement. one upon the other.
Fu-Manchu, from Smith's account, in no way re

sembled this crouching apparition, with the death's head sembled this crouching apparition, with the death's head countenance and lithe movements; but an instinct of some kind told me that we were on the right scent-that this was one of the doctor's servants. How I came to that conclusion I cannot explain; but with no doult in my mind that this was a member of the formidable nurder group, I watched the yellow man creep nearernearer—silently—bent, and peering.

He was watching us.

Of another circumstance I became aware—and a disquieting circumstance. There were fewer murmuings

Of another circumstance I became aware—and a disquieting circumstance. There were fewer murmuings and sighings from the surrounding bunks. The resence of the crouching figure had created a sudden smisilence in the den, which could only mean that some of the supposed opium smokers had merely feigned oma and the approach of coma.

Nayland Smith lay like a dead man, and trusting to the darkness, I, too, lay prone and still, and wathed the evil face bending lower and lower—until it dime within a few inches of my own. I completely closed my eves.

Delicate fingers touched my right eyelid. Divining what was coming, I rolled my eyes up as the lid was adroitly lifted and lowered again. The man moved "Good!" whispered Smith at my side. "I don't think I could have done it! He took me on trust after thit! My God! what an awful face! Petrie, it's the hundback of Cadby's notes! Ah! I thought so! Do you se

I turned my eyes round as far as was possible. A man had scrambled down from one of the bunks and was following the bent figure across the room! They passed around us quietly, the little yellow nan leading with his curious, lithe gait, and the other, an mpassive Chinaman, following. The curtain was raised, and I heard their footsteps receding on the stair. and I heard their footsteps receding on the stair.

Footsteps on the stair, and the Chinaman reappeard, recrossed the floor and passed out. The little, bent man went over to another bunk—this time leading up the stair one who looked like a lascar.

"Did you see his right hand?" whispered Smith. "A dacoit! They come here to report and to take orders! Petrie! Dr. Fu-Manchu is up there!"

What shall we do?"-softly. Wait. Then we must try to rush the stairs! It would be futile to bring in the police first. He is stre-to have some other exit. I will give the word while he little yellow devil is down here. You are nearer and will have to go first, but if the hunchback follows I can then deal with him. I shall be directly at your Our whispered colloquy was interrupted by the

turn of the dacoit, who recrossed the room as the Chinaman had done and immediately took his departure. A third man, whom Smith identified as a Malay, ascended the mysterious stairs, descended, and went out; and fourth, whose nationality it was impossible to determine followed. Then, as the softly moving usher crossed to a bunk on the right of the outer door—
"Up you go, Petrie!" cried Smith—for further delay
was dangerous and further dissimulation useless. I leaped to my feet. Snatching my revolver from the pocket of the rough jacket I wore, I bounded to the stair and went blundering up in complete darkness. A chorus of brutish cries clamored from behind, with a muffled scream rising above them all; but Naylard smith was close behind as I raced along a covered gantway, in purer air, and at my heels when I crashed open a door at the end and almost fell into the room beyond. What I saw was merely a dirty table, with some odds and ends upon it of which I was too excited to take note, an oil lamp swung by a brass chain above, and a man sitting behind the table. But from the moment that my gaze rested upon the one who sat there, I think if the place had been an Aladdin's palace I should have had no eyes for any of its wonders.

He wore a plain yellow robe, of a hue almost identical with that of his smooth, hairless countenance. His hands were large, long, and bony, and he held then knuckles upward and rested his pointed chin upon the thinness. He had a great, high brow, crowned with sparse, neutral-colored hair. Of his tace as it looked out at me over the dirt table, I despair of writing convincingly. It was that of an archangel of evil; and it was wholly dominated by the most uncanny eyes that ever reflected a human soul; for they were narrow and long, very slightly oblique-and of a brilliant green! But their unique horror lav-in a certain filminess (it made me think of the membrani nicutans in a bird) which, obscuring them as I threw wide the door, seemed to lift as I actually passed the threshold, revealing the eyes in all their brilliant

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I know that I stopped dead, one foot within the room, for the malignant force of the man was something surpassing my experience. He was surprised by this sudden intrusion-yes; but no trace of fear showed upon that wonderful face-only a sort of pitying contempt. And, as I paused, he rose slowly to his feet, never removing his gaze from mine.

"It's Fu-Manchu!" cried Smith, over my shoulder, in a voice that almost was a scream. "It's Fu-Manchu! Cover him! Shoot him dead if

The conclusion of that sentence I never heard. Dr. Fu-Manchu reached down beside the table-and the floor slipped from under me!

One last glimpse I had of the fixed, green eyes, and with a scream I was unable to repress I droppeddropped-dropped . . . and plunged into icy water, which closed over my head! Vaguely, I had seen a spurt of flame-had heard an-

other cry following upon my own-a booming sound (the trap)-the flat note of a police whistle. But when I rose to the surface, impenetrable darkness enveloped me. I was spitting filthy, oily liquid from my mouth, and fighting down the black terror that had me by the throat; terror of the darkness about me, of the unknown depths beneath me, of the pit into which I was cast amid stifling stenches and the lapping of tidal water.

"Smith!" I cried . . "Help! Help!" My voice seemed to beat back upon me, yet I was about to cry out again, when, mustering all my presence of mind and all my failing courage, I recognized that I had better employment for my energies, and began to swim straight ahead, desperately determined to face all the h rrors of this place-to die hard if die I must. A drop of liquid fire fell through the darkness and

hissed into the water beside me! I felt that, despite my resolution, I was going mad.

Another fiery drop-and another! I touched a rotting wooden post and slimy timbers. had reached one bound of my watery prison. More fire fell from above, and the scream of hysteria quivered,

unuttered, in my throat. Keeping myself afloat with increasing difficulty in my heavy garments, I threw my head back and raised my

No more drops fell, and no more drops would fall; but it was merely a question of time for the floor to

collapse. For it was beginning to emit a dull, red glow. It was drops of burning oil from the lamp, finding passage through the cracks in the crazy flooring, which had fallen about me—for the death trap had reclosed. I ppose mechanically.

My saturated garments were dragging me down and now I could hear the flames hungrily eating into the ancient rottenness overhead. Shortly that caldron would be loosed upon my head. The glow of the flames grew brighter * * * and showed me the half-rotten piles upholding the building, showed me the tidal mark upon the slime-coated walls—showed me that there was By some subterranean duct the foul place was fed

from the Thames. By that duct, with the outgoing tide, my body would pass, in the wake of Mason, Cadby and Rusty iron rungs were affixed to one of the walls communicating with a trap—but the bottom three were

Brighter and brighter grew the awesome light-the Brighter and brighter grew the awesome light—the light of what should be my funeral pyre—reddening the oily water and adding a new dread to the whispering, clammy horror of the pit. But something it showed me

• • a projecting beam a few feet above the water

• and directly below the iron ladder!

"Merciful heaven!" I breathed, "Have I the strength?"

A desire for laughter claimed me with sudden, all but irresistible force. I knew what it portended and fought it down—grimly, sternly.

but irresistible force. I knew what it portended and fought it down—grimly, sternly.

My garments weighed upon me like a suit of mall; with my chest aching dully, my veins throbbing to bursting, I forced tired muscles to work, and, every stroke an agony, approached the beam. Nearer I swam agony, approached the beam. Nearer I swam anearer. Its shadow fell black upon the water, which now had all the seeming of a pool of blood. Confused sounds—a remote uproar—came to my ears. I was nearly spent a laws in the shadow of the beam! If I could throw up one arm a shrill scream sounded above me!

A shrill scream sounded above me!
"Petrie! Petrie!" (That voice must be Smith's!) "Don't
touch the beam! For God's sake don't touch the beam!

Keep affoat another few seconds and I can get to you!"

Another few seconds! Was that possible?

I managed to turn, to raise my throbbing head; and
I saw the strangest sight which that night yet had Nayland Smith stood upon the lowest iron rung * * * supported by the hideous, crook-backed Chinaman, who

It was as Smith hissed the words despairingly that I looked up—and saw the Chinaman snatch at his coiled pigtail and pull it off! With it came the wig to which is was attached; and the ghastly yellow mask, deprived of its fastenings, fell from position!
"Here! Here! Be quick! Oh, be quick! You can
lower this to him! Be quick! Be quick!"
A cloud of hair came falling about the slim shoulders as the speaker bent to pass this strange lifeline to Smith; and I think it was my wonder at knowing her for the

and I think it was my wonder at knowing her for the girl whom that day I had surprised in Cadby's rooms which saved my life.

For I not only kept affoat, but kept my gaze upturned to that beautiful, flushed face, and my eyes fixed upon hers—which were wild with fear for me!

Smith, by some contortion, got the false queue into my grasp, and I, with the strength of desperation, by that means seized hold upon the lowest rung. With my friend's arm around me. I realized that exhaustion was that means seized hold upon the lowest rung. With my friend's arm around me, I realized that exhaustion was even nearer than I had supposed. My last distinct memory is of the bursting of the floor above and the big burning joist hissing into the pool beneath us. Its fiery passage, striated with light, disclosed two sword blades, riveted, edges up, along the top of the beam which I had striven to reach.

"The severed fingers-" I said; and swooned. How Smith got me through the trap I do not know-nor how we made our way through the smoke and flames of the narrow passage it opened upon. My next recollection is of sitting up, with my friend's arm supporting me and Inspector Ryman holding a glass to my lips.

A bright glare dazzled my eyes. A crowd surged about us, and a clangor and shouting drew momentarily "It's the engines coming!" explained Smith, seeing my bewilderment. "Shen-Yan's is in flames! It was your shot, as you fell through the trap, that broke the oil lamp."

"Fu-Manchu-Smith shrugged his shoulders. "No one has seen him. There was some door at the

"Do you think he may-"
"No," he said tensely. "Not until I see him lying dead before me shall I believe it!" Then memory resumed its sway. I struggled to my Smith! where is she?" I cried. "Where is she?"

"Smith! where is she?" I cried. "Where is she?"

"I don't know!" he answered shortly.

"She's given us the slip, doctor!" said Inspector Weymouth—as a fire engine came swinging round the corner into the narrow lane. "So has Mr. Singapore Charlie—and, I'm afraid, somebody else! We've got six or eight all sorts, some awake and some asleep; but I suppose we shall have to let 'em go again. Mr. Smith tells me that the girl was disguised as a Chinaman. I expect that's why she managed to slip away."

I recalled how I had been dragged from the plt by the false queue—how the strange discovery which had brought death to poor Cadby had brought life to me; and I seemed to remember, too, that Smith had dropped it as he threw his arm about me on the ladder. Her mask the girl might have retained, but her wig, I felt mask the girl might have retained, but her wig, I felt

mask the girl might have retained, but her wig, I felt certain, had been dropped into the water.

It was later that night, when the brigade still were playing upon the blackened shell of what had been Shen-Yan's opium shop, and Smith and I were speeding away in a cab from the scene of God alone knows how many crimes, that I had an idea.

"Smith," I said, "did you bring the pigtail with you that was found on Cadby?"

"Yes! I had hoped to meet the owner."

"Have you got it now?"

"No! I met the owner!"

I thrust my hands deep into the pockets of the big

I thrust my hands deep into the pockets of the big pea-jacket lent to me by Inspector Ryman, leaning back in my corner.

"We shall never really excel at this business," continued Nayland Smith. "We are far too sentimental! I knew what it meant to us, Petrie—what it meant to the world; but I hadn't the heart! I owed her your life.

• • I had to square the account!"

More thrilling, more intense and more mysterious than even this adventure tale is the third of the Fu-Manchu storles, "Redmont," which will appear on next Sunday. Nayland Smith, the keen-witted Englishman, and Fu-Manchu, the subtlest of the crafty Chinese, will again match with in a desperate game, contexting for the life of the owner of "Redmont." You will have rend few things that are more weird or aneanny than the watchdog's search

for the midnight assassin on the lawn,